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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**ASSESSING THE ORGANIZATION AND CAPABILITIES OF
4TH MARINE LOGISTICS GROUP**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: Assessing the Organization and Capabilities of 4th Marine Logistics Group

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Thesis: In order to enhance operational effectiveness and continue its mandated responsibility to augment and reinforce, 4th Marine Logistics Group (MLG) should adopt further organizational changes within specific parameters to complement the structure and capabilities of the Active Component MLGs.

Discussion: The Marine Corps began the most comprehensive logistics reform to date in 2005—Logistics Modernization. However, 4th MLG remained in functionally aligned battalions pending further structure and organization analysis. The MLG reorganization effort remains iterative, meaning as new requirements or organizational capabilities are identified by the operating forces, efforts will be made to improve MLG organization to best support the MAGTF. Despite significant differences in the mission of the AC and RC MLGs, recent employment and emerging missions necessitate changes in the organizational structure of 4th MLG. This paper examines the historical context of the total force, the organizational evolution of Marine Corps logistics, capability assessment of the MLGs, and emerging roles and responsibilities of 4th MLG in particular.

Conclusion: Reserve force structure changes initiated by DoD and the respective service components are positive, yet should be taken a step further. Specifically, the long term solution for the structure of 4th MLG must leverage potential advantages while addressing existing limitations. Standing multi-functional logistics units with habitual support relationships, just as the Active Component MLGs, would maximize operational effectiveness and foster interoperability.

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PREFACE

I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Brad Wineman, for his academic advice and patience throughout the MMS program. His professional guidance undoubtedly made me a better student and a better officer.

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ASSESSING THE ORGANIZATION AND CAPABILITIES OF 4TH MARINE LOGISTICS GROUP

INTRODUCTION

“Military forces are constantly evolving, changing their size, composition, organization, and capabilities in response to the environment in which they operate. Because of this, the logistics organizations that move and maintain these forces must evolve as well.”

Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 4, *Logistics*

Over the next few years, the United States Marine Corps will shift focus from Iraq and Afghanistan and resume operations across the full range of military operations. As a result, the Marine Corps must refine and enhance its core competencies and structure to meet the requirements for adaptable expeditionary forces capable of fulfilling the nation’s strategic imperatives. Likewise, logistics organizations must also evolve in response to changing roles and responsibilities.

The establishment of the Marine Logistics Groups (MLG) in 2005 marked the most significant restructuring effort within the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) in the last 30 years. In broad terms, the MLG construct ensures the logistics combat element (LCE) is organized in garrison as it is when deployed and facilitates strong, habitual relationships between supported and supporting units. Coupled with the recent growth of the Marine Corps to 202,000 personnel, the MLG continues to refine operational effectiveness and efficiency through improvements in organization, training, and technology. However, much of this institutional development has not been carried over to the Reserve Component (RC). Specifically, the 4th Marine Logistics Group remains organized as a strategic force provider and is not fully leveraging its internal strengths, fostering interoperability, nor sustaining proficiency in emerging processes and technologies. In order to enhance operational effectiveness and continue

its mandated responsibility to augment and reinforce, 4th MLG should adopt further organizational changes within specific parameters to complement the structure and capabilities of the Active Component (AC) MLGs.

METHODOLOGY

The intent of this paper is to provide a detailed understanding of how 4th MLG is currently organized and what capabilities it provides to the total force. The primary research question is, “Are changes in structure and organization necessary within 4th MLG in order to maximize operational effectiveness?” As the thesis was refined, several assertions emerged:

- (1) 4th MLG did not reorganize to the extent of the AC MLGs in 2005 under the Logistics Modernization initiative;
- (2) 4th MLG has unique capabilities that should be maximized; and
- (3) 4th MLG has inherent limitations that should also be considered.

Research and the framework for analysis concentrated on the historical context of the total force, the organizational evolution of Marine Corps logistics, capability assessment of the MLGs, and emerging roles and responsibilities of 4th MLG in particular. Primary sources include the Logistics Modernization (LOGMOD) Transition Task Force, the Operational Reserve Working Group (ORWG), and interviews with key personnel within the office of the Deputy Commandant, Installations and Logistics (DC, I&L), Marine Forces Reserve (MFR), and the MLGs. The paper also relies heavily on the author’s personal observations, experiences, and deployments as a logistician with both 1st and 4th MLGs.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The current reserve force is shaped largely by principles and policies from the Cold War. Specifically, the RC of each service exists as combat ready augmentation to the AC when expansion of U.S. military forces is required to meet operational requirements. The nation's reserve components (referring to the total of all National Guard members and Reserve forces from all branches of the military) comprise approximately 48 percent of the total available military manpower.¹ The current National Defense Strategy indicates that the National Guard and Reserve will be full partners in the total force supporting a demanding operations tempo and training to maintain readiness.

U.S. military efforts in the contemporary security environment have relied from the beginning on individuals and units from the RC. In fact, most Marine Corps Reserve units and many individual reserve Marines have been activated for at least a year, and many more for several years since September 2001.² While recent overseas contingency operations (OCO) have demanded much from all services and components, the recurring requirements have been especially challenging with respect to the nature of reserve participation in the all-volunteer force.

The services activated and deployed RC forces in large numbers in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm for the first time since the Korean War. Since then, the U.S. has routinely deployed the RC alongside the AC for exercises and operations. However, the nation faces a strategic threat of unprecedented complexity and duration. As a result, individual service policies, programs, employment plans, and force structure must be reviewed and updated to maintain the RCs as operational forces in the current environment. This applies to combat and logistics organizations alike.

History and future projections confirm that the deployment, employment, and sustainment of any significant combat force require a large number of RC assets. In order to fulfill their wartime responsibilities, RC logistics units must be appropriately structured, staffed, trained, equipped, and interoperable with the forces they support. In fact, the highest priority of the Marine Forces Reserve Strategic Plan 2007 - 2012 is "Develop and optimize force structure and capabilities of the Reserve Component, multiplying the effect of the Total Force."³

EVOLUTION OF LOGISTICS IN THE MARINE CORPS RESERVE

From inception, the structure of logistics units in MFR has remained relatively static. Formally established in 1966, the 4th Force Service Support Regiment (FSSR) largely resembled AC logistics units of the time in terms of personnel, organization, and equipment. Many of the large, depot-type logistics units were deactivated following World War II and the Korean War respectively. The divisions maintained most of their organic combat service support, problems identified by the Marine Corps Organization and Composition Board. Therefore, the FSSRs emerged as tactical organizations with functional battalions designed to provide "common supply, service, and maintenance functions to task-organized air and ground units."⁴ The Fleet Marine Force (FMF) retained such capabilities as salvage, graves registration, explosives ordnance disposal, medical services, and air delivery. 4th FSSR implemented the same changes as much as possible given the unique challenges posed by geographic separation of headquarters and reserve training centers.

The advent of the Total Force concept in the early 1970s fundamentally changed the structure and resource allocation of U.S. military forces. Specifically, it advocated integrating active and reserve components into a "total force," with reserve forces responsible for

augmenting their active counterparts. Following several years of policy and doctrinal evolution (in addition to budget cuts and the transition to an all-volunteer force), much of the services' logistics support was assigned to the reserve component.⁵

The next significant event occurred in 1975 when the FSSRs were reorganized and renamed to "Force Service Support Groups" (FSSGs), formally incorporating lessons learned from Vietnam and the aforementioned shift in doctrinal logistics responsibilities. Specifically, they were organized into functional battalions to support a Marine Amphibious Force (MAF).⁶ Capabilities were consolidated from the division, wing, and combat service support to achieve a balance that would create single subordinate regimental and group-sized commands to provide essential support while, at the same time, relieving combat units of the burden of maintenance and logistics. Engineering and medical capabilities were also incorporated into the FSSG. Under this construct, Combat Service Support (CSS) units were task-organized from the respective battalions but the concept would not be rigorously tested until 1991.

Throughout the Cold War, the RC remained structured as a strategic reserve and the role of logistics units in particular was not clearly defined. Despite relocating its headquarters several times, logistics practices did not change much within 4th FSSG as capabilities remained limited to transportation, supply, and maintenance. Several RC logistics units were established during this period (specifically bulk fuel and beach operation companies) since these functions were normally considered wartime capabilities and were staffed at reduced levels in the AC FSSGs. Despite the continued emphasis on a more joint and integrated total force, logistics responsibilities remained largely separated by service and component. Even the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense (DoD) Reorganization Act of 1986 failed to address the reserves.

It is also important to note that 4th FSSG was not yet designated as a major subordinate command and was, in fact, subordinate to 4th Marine Division.⁷ This organizational hierarchy reflected the traditional relationship between combat and logistics units and had significant impacts on administration, training, and mobilization. However, toward the end of the 1980s, 4th FSSG became a separate major subordinate command. In addition, it no longer augmented AC gaps but was structured to support strictly Reserve combat forces.

As previously stated, the FSSG was a collection of functional battalions. The deliberate buildup of forces prior to Operation Desert Storm allowed the Marine Corps to organize the FSSGs into direct support and general support elements, thus negating the expected lack of cohesion and training of such task-organized units. However, the concept of operations employed 1st and 2nd FSSGs in support of a single MEF, skewing the objective assessment of the organization.⁸ Although logistics operations were largely successful during Desert Storm, several organizational deficiencies surfaced. Specifically, the FSSGs did not facilitate rapid deployment, streamlined command and control, or synergy from habitual relationships between supported and supporting units. 4th FSSG contributions were significant in terms of both personnel and equipment during this large scale but short conflict. However, it was merely a force provider and also benefited from the protracted buildup period, facilitating integration and training. These challenges were the subject of much debate within the logistics community for the next ten years but would not prompt bold changes until faced again in Operations Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF).

The very nature of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq (deep, rapid advances with large conventional forces) placed considerable demands on logistics organizations. Thus, the FSSGs were again forced to reorganize and expand in order to provide requisite combat service support

to the maneuver elements. Yet again, functional battalions were shuffled to provide direct support to the regimental combat teams while maintaining considerable general and internal support capabilities.⁹ 4th FSSG provided significant reinforcing capabilities including a Motor Transport Battalion, an Engineer Support Battalion, Landing Support Battalion headquarters, Military Police Companies, mortuary affairs, and hundreds of other individual augmentees. In total, 1st FSSG increased to almost twice its normal size during OIF I.¹⁰ Such drastic reorganization led to another critical assessment of the force and, more specifically, the FSSG.

Whereas the FSSG was uniquely structured and aligned, it required exhaustive management and constant task organization to conduct operations. Experience from Desert Storm and OEF/OIF indicated the need to create standing multi-functional logistics organizations with habitual relationships with supported units capable of deploying rapidly. It also underscored the continued reliance on MARFORRES for logistics support in operations and contingencies.

The aforementioned operational requirements, coupled with the *military transformation* initiative within DoD in the early 2000s, prompted comprehensive reviews of concepts, doctrine, concepts, force structure, and programs. Specifically, this policy was aimed at transforming the military into an agile force capable of operating across the full range of operations and responding to emerging threats. Technology and equipment were the most visible result although transformation also had significant implications on organization, evident by the increase in modular units and standardized AC/RC designs. During this period, the Marine Corps specifically conducted a Total Force Structure Review in order to assess and rebalance capabilities between the reserve and active components.¹¹ Although the Marine Corps was eventually authorized to increase its active component end strength from 179,000 to 202,000, the

projected increase for MFR and 4th FSSG was negligible. In fact, maintaining an authorized end strength of 39,600, MFR currently provides 25 percent of the Corps' combat capabilities and approximately 30 percent of its logistics capabilities.¹² In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Michael Hagee, then Commandant of the Marine Corps, described the impact of initiatives prompted by the review as follows:

In the reserve component these structure initiatives will increase the capability of Marine Forces Reserve Command to better respond to the Global War on Terror. We will establish an intelligence support battalion, a security/anti-terrorism battalion, and two additional light armored reconnaissance companies. We will also augment existing capabilities in the areas of civil affairs and command and control, and we are restructuring some reserve units to convert them into Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Detachments—allowing more timely access to these Marine reservists to support contingency operations.¹³

Notably, General Hagee's comments did not address 4th FSSG although there were significant changes underway within the broader logistics community.

As previously stated, the Marine Corps began the most comprehensive logistics reform to date in 2005—Logistics Modernization, a comprehensive effort to improve logistics support to MAGTF operations and future warfighting concepts with a focus on people, processes, and technology. Lieutenant General Richard Kelly (then Deputy Commandant, Installations and Logistics) even described LOGMOD as the “most important warfighting support initiative of our generation.”¹⁴ One of the initiatives, and the focus of this paper, is realignment and renaming of the FSSG.

Now known as Marine Logistics Groups (MLGs), the intent was to provide the same comprehensive capabilities of the previous FSSG via standing, multi-functional Direct Support (DS) and functional General Support (GS) logistics units with rapid and seamless deployment capabilities. The MLG construct provides commanders the resources and flexibility to task

organize via manning documents and equipment density lists (EDLs). Another result was permanent command and control, operations, and planning capabilities. These units also now have standard naming conventions based on unit size and capabilities and the term “logistics” replaced “combat service support.” It should also be noted that the FSSG transition to the MLG was executed with a zero sum growth constraint.

A fundamental difference between the MLG and the previous FSSG is that logistics elements now train with the units they are apportioned. The direct support Combat Logistics Regiment (CLR) contains three direct support Combat Logistics Battalions (CLBs) aligned with corresponding infantry regiments, and a general support motor transport company. The general support CLR contains smaller, functionally-oriented supply, maintenance, and medical battalions and Combat Logistics Companies (CLCs) organized to support the Marine Air Wings and regional installations. The CLR (Forward) contains those assets formerly under Headquarters and Service (H&S) Battalion in addition to a landing support company and the CLBs assigned to the Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs). Dental Battalion and the Engineer Support Battalion (ESB) remain separate battalions directly under the MLG headquarters. Appendix 1 reflects the current organization.

Although realignment *standardized* MLG structure across the AC, it did not *mirror* individual units. Moderate differences exist at the CLC and CLB level even between the AC MLGs due to operational and structural differences in their respective MEFs and the scope of installations they support. An August 2008 Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) study concluded that selected units that are mirrored (infantry battalions, for example) promote training and operational opportunities. It also recommended the standardization of the CLCs.¹⁵

Despite significant progress under the MLG initiative, LCE doctrine has not been fully developed or promulgated. Many source documents and publications still refer to previous concepts, responsibilities, and organization. Realignment and renaming was, by design, an iterative process. Subsequent tasks included but were not limited to drafting mission statements, reviewing TO&Es, redistributing equipment, and relocating as required.

Despite these extensive changes, Marine Corps Administrative Message (MARADMIN) 576/05 specifically stated “4th MLG will remain in functionally aligned battalions pending further structure and organization analysis.”¹⁶ In fact, 4th MLG was not reorganized like the AC MLGs based on five positions taken by senior leadership within MARFORRES at the time of this transition:

- (1) Functional units facilitate recruiting, MOS training, career progression, command opportunities, and oversight;
- (2) Geography did not lend itself to well-defined CLB/CLR alignment;
- (3) Lack of intermediate capabilities (supply, general support motor transport);
- (4) Lack of habitual relationships with RC regiments; and
- (5) RC logistics responsibilities are fundamentally different than those of the AC.¹⁷

Deferring full implementation proved to be a prudent decision. In fact, many of the conditions and assumptions behind realignment were largely absent in 4th MLG at the time including common organizational platforms, habitual relationships with supported units, and unit designators consistent with Joint and Marine Corps doctrine regarding size and associated command structure. This naturally leads to an assessment of the mission, composition, and capabilities unique to MFR and 4th MLG.

COMPOSITION

The Marine Corps Reserve is organized, trained, and equipped to augment and reinforce the AC. Title 10 of the United States Code states:

The purpose of each reserve component is to provide trained units and qualified persons available for active duty in the armed forces, in time of war or national emergency, and at such other times as the national security may require, to fill the needs of the armed forces whenever more units and persons are needed than are in the regular components.¹⁸

The contributions and performance of Marine reservists in support of current operations are unprecedented and well documented. However, the preponderance of mobilizations and activations from 4th MLG have been to augment and reinforce AC battalions whereas reserve infantry battalions usually deploy as units. This trend is indicative of the evolution of the RC to more of an operational role.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to define *operational reserve* since it provides the framework for an analysis of 4th MLG. A relatively new term that emerged in response to force requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan, DoD defines it as:

The total Reserve component structure which operates across the continuum of military missions performing both strategic and operations roles in peacetime, wartime, contingency, domestic emergencies and homeland defense operations. As such, the Services organize, resource, equip, train, and utilize their Guard and Reserve components to support mission requirements to the same standards as their active components. Each Service's force generation plan prepares both units and individuals to participate in missions, across the full spectrum of military operations, in a cycle or periodic manner that provides predictability for the combatant commands, the Services, Service Members, their families, and civilian employers.¹⁹

Conversely, the *strategic reserve* is a force designed to facilitate rapid, yet infrequent, expansion of the armed forces for a large conventional war from all categories of the RC (SMCR, IRR, and retired) that are otherwise not activated in regular rotation. Both models remain relevant yet

there is no reasonable alternative to the nation's continuing increased reliance on the RC as part of an operational force.

Again, recent contingency operations confirm that the RC offers significant capability for relatively little cost. In fact, the CNGR's final report indicated that an active component service member costs approximately four times as much as a reserve component service member when he or she is not activated.²⁰ Thus, the RC must assess and align capabilities in order to effectively augment and reinforce the AC is essential.

As previously stated, there is only slight variation between the three AC MLGs. However, there are significant organizational differences in 4th MLG which go back to its historical mission as a strategic reserve. The largest Marine Logistics Group, 4th MLG is comprised of more than 10,000 Marines and sailors from 131 units at 64 sites across the United States, representing over 150 Military Occupational Specialties (MOS).²¹ Obviously, the size and geographic separation of 4th MLG poses unique challenges with respect to span of control, recruiting, career progression, and collective training.

Currently, 4th MLG still maintains the construct of separate, functional battalions—Headquarters and Service Battalion, 4th Maintenance Battalion, 4th Supply Battalion, 6th Engineer Support Battalion, 4th Landing Support Battalion, 6th Motor Transport Battalion, 4th Medical Battalion, and 4th Dental Battalion. 4th MLG also has operational and administrative control of 6th Communications Battalion whereas the AC Communication Battalions reside in the MEF Headquarters Group (MHG). Lastly, 4th MLG has two subordinate command elements—4th MLG (Forward) West and East—that are co-located with 1st and 2d MLGs respectively. These staffs were formed to foster integration with the AC MLGs for exercise support, contingency planning, and other emerging requirements. (Appendix 2 depicts the

current organizational structure of 4th MLG.) However, the organizational differences go beyond naming or numbering conventions.

CAPABILITIES AND LIMITATIONS

The mission of the AC MLGs is fundamentally different than that of 4th MLG. The formal mission statement for the AC MLGs is standardized and reads: “To provide direct support to the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) Ground Combat Element (GCE) and general support and sustained tactical-level logistics support above the organic capabilities of support elements of the MEF.”²² (CLR/CLB mission statements are also largely standard across the AC.) However, 4th MLG’s mission statement reads significantly different: “To serve as the intermediate logistics provider to Marine Forces Reserve; to field and provide ready augmentation and reinforcement capabilities to gaining forces; and to serve in support of other missions as directed.”²³ Yet review of the 4th MLG organizational structure and mission statement do not fully convey its operational role nor define its priority of support.

Maintaining functional alignment in 4th MLG negates the stated advantages of reorganization, specifically, rapid and seamless task organization, standing and experienced planning capabilities, and habitual relationships with supported units. For example, when 4th MLG is tasked to provide an LCE, it takes considerable coordination to build a cohesive staff, define support requirements, source equipment, train, and deploy.

Another significant difference between the AC MLGs and 4th MLG is the size of their respective staffs. Despite its designation a Major Subordinate Command (MSC), the 4th MLG staff is not nearly as robust as the AC MLGs. Therefore, many traditional logistics capabilities are performed by the MFR (MEF equivalent headquarters) logistics directorate—secondary

repairable management, clothing support, ammunition, food services, traffic management, movement control, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)/General Services Administration (GSA) support, and inspection/compliance teams.²⁴ It should be noted that 4th MLG may assume or form these capabilities ad hoc for specific operational or exercise requirements yet no permanent structure exists. For example, 4th MLG has clearly defined intermediate logistics responsibilities in the Total Force Mobilization, Activation, Integration, and Deactivation Plan (MAID-P). There are even several logistics functions and services that are not performed at all in MFR including intermediate supply, legal, postal, exchange, disbursing, explosives ordnance disposal, and air delivery.

As another point of contrast, there are differences in readiness between components. Although entry-level training is the same for all Marines, there are often significant disparities between the AC and RC with respect to skill progression and sustainment. Limited training—two days per month plus two weeks of annual training—characterize the RC yet also preclude proficiency commensurate with the AC. (It should be noted that the readiness and capability of some RC units and individuals compare favorably with those of the AC because of previous military or civilian experience.²⁵) Increases in operational tempo, the technical nature of many logistics MOSs, limited training resources, and additional training requirements exacerbate this problem within 4th MLG. Even more significant are the limited opportunities for collective unit and staff training. Although most reports of RC performance in OEF/OIF are positive, several assessments are critical of the staff planning capabilities of RC officers and staff noncommissioned officers (SNCOs). Specifically, many RC officers and SNCOs were not proficient in operational planning or Combat Logistics Operations Center (CLOC) operations.

With regards to equipment, the gap between the AC MLGs and 4th MLG is not nearly as wide. The use of RC equipment in OEF/OIF has certainly degraded their availability and condition yet readiness remains high due to unprecedented funding. Whereas historically, RC requirements were low priority and often older, obsolete equipment was passed down from the AC, changes in DoD and service acquisition and fielding plans ensure that all units, regardless of component, are resourced for equipment according to the sequence in which they are projected to deploy. As part of LOGMOD, 4th MLG has certainly kept pace with the AC MLGs by concurrently fielding most of new items. 4th MLG has even been tasked to collaborate with Marine Corps Systems Command (MARCORSYSCOM) and Marine Corps Logistics Command (MCLC) in the research, development, testing, and evaluation of technologies, equipment, and systems.

Differences between 4th MLG and the AC MLGs are the result of legislative and budgetary constraints, geographic separation, staffing shortfalls, training limitations, and a host of other characteristics unique to the reserve component. Such differences obviously define the organization, roles, and responsibilities of RC units. Thus, the evolution to an operational reserve and emerging requirements require that the differences between components be isolated, minimized, and in some cases, leveraged.

EMERGING ROLES

4th MLG will continue to support OEF/OIF using the Force Generation Model (FGM). However, in order to meet future requirements and support efforts to reset and modernize the force, 4th MLG will continue to identify and schedule additional operations and training

opportunities. The desired end-state is an organization that can support the AC with familiar, proficient, experienced, and cohesive logistics forces.

Despite functional and organizational constraints, 4th MLG provides operational support ranging from liaison cells to Joint Task Force (JTF) staffs. Smaller LCEs are routine yet indicative of emerging roles. Notably, 4th MLG activated and deployed CLB-46 as the first all-reserve logistics battalion in support of the OIF 9.2 rotation. DC, I&L directed a report of lessons learned to determine the feasibility of sourcing RC CLBs without the restructuring of 4th MLG.²⁶

In recent years, 4th MLG was designated as the Marine Logistics Command (MLC) in Korean operation plans. MCWP 4-12 defines MLC as “a CSSE designated as the Marine Forces in theater (MARFOR) operational logistics unit.”²⁷ Specifically, an MLC is established in major regional contingencies to perform the following tasks: establish inter-theater and intra-theater logistics system; coordinate arrival/assembly and other force closure operations; and integrate host nation, inter-service, common item, and cross-service support. Although 4th MLG’s role in the Korea Theater of Operations (KTO) is being reduced substantially, the staff developed a significant operational logistics capacity which is relevant and transferrable to other contingencies.²⁸ 4th MLG also fostered a habitual relationship with 3d MLG and continues to provide tactical logistics as required.

In accordance with current operating concepts, MFR assumed an increased role in Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) and military-to-military training events since 2001 based on its unique organizational characteristics and AC operational tempo. Consequently, 4th MLG is supporting many of these events by providing LCEs, provisional security companies, civil affairs detachments, and training teams. Recent examples include Unitas, Southern Partnership Station,

and African Partnership Station, combined joint exercises promoting regional cooperation and interoperability.

4th MLG, in consonance with MCLC, is the lead Marine Corps logistics unit for the concepts of Naval Logistics Integration (NLI), Seabasing, and the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF).²⁹ Much like LOGMOD, these initiatives seek to improve and further integrate service logistics capabilities in support of expeditionary operations. Personnel from 4th MLG routinely augment and participate in MPF events.

4th MLG also collaborates with Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) in the development and testing of doctrine in support of advancing logistics capabilities. Recently, Marines from 4th MLG participated in the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory Enhanced Company Operations (ECO) distributed logistics event at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, California. The purpose of this event was to assess resupply, casualty evacuation, and transportation via unmanned vehicles. 4th MLG also contributed to the Experimental Forward Operating Base (ExFOB) at Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia. This event is designed to evaluate selected commercial technologies to produce potable water and generate power in a tactical environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Before proposing bold recommendations, it should be noted that 4th MLG continues to effectively perform assigned missions. Therefore, efficiencies may be gained simply by addressing organization and training. As previously stated, neither cost nor equipment were identified as limiting factors for maintaining functional alignment within 4th MLG yet are

undoubtedly factors when considering organizational change. Direct and indirect costs often emerge when units are formed or relocated.

In April 2009, the Operational Reserve Working Group (ORWG) made several recommendations to establish or reinforce specific capabilities within 4th MLG yet did not advocate extensive reorganization. Specifically, the ORWG proposed:

- the addition or expansion of specialized units and capabilities (Material Distribution, Contingency Contracting, Air Delivery, line-haul/heavy lift Motor Transport, Personnel Retrieval and Processing);
- “mirror image” selected functional companies with AC MLG companies (MP Company, DS MT Company, GS MT Company, Surgical Company, Engineer Line Company, Bulk Fuel Company, Bridge Company);
- disband Rations Company; and
- determine the feasibility of sourcing reserve CLBs without restructuring 4th MLG.³⁰

Based on the preceding assessment and review of emerging roles for 4th MLG, these recommendations remain valid. Having the benefit of continuous operational employment to validate the MLG construct, additional organizational changes to 4th MLG are warranted.

To remain relevant in the total force, 4th MLG should be organized as the AC MLGs are—CLRs and CLBs. This reorganization could largely be accomplished by merging and redesignating existing functional battalion headquarters. Although organization of the respective staffs could happen quickly, it would take much longer to place the requisite ranks and MOSs in the sub-tier units (companies and detachments).

The aforementioned organizational changes are necessary and viable. Therefore, it is necessary to address the original reasons offered to maintain functional battalions in 4th MLG. First, functional units certainly facilitate recruiting, MOS training, career progression, command

opportunities, and oversight. However, many of these requirements could be developed over time in a CLR/CLB construct. In addition to adopting an operational structure, 4th MLG must continue to maintain some portion of existing RC general purpose logistics forces to augment or reinforce any size or type of deploying MAGTF or LCE. This will provide requisite personnel to fill gaps during contingencies and periods of high operational tempo. It will also serve to provide traditional career opportunities for RC Marines of all ranks.

Geography remains the most significant obstacle when considering further reorganization of 4th MLG into CLRs and CLBs. The challenge of time and space can certainly be mitigated for administration and most staff action. However, supported and supporting units must be within close proximity for collective training and routine logistics functions such as supply and maintenance. Whereas CLB-5 can provide responsive logistics support to 5th Marine Regiment (or a subordinate battalion) because they are co-located at Camp Pendleton, two comparable reserve units may be separated by thousands of miles. One potential solution would be to create “east” and “west” CLR headquarters with regional CLBs, similar to the organization of Marine Corps Installations (MCI) and Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC).

In regards to intermediate supply and motor transport capabilities, these functions could be maintained within the MFR without a significant reduction in capability by 4th MLG. As CLRs and CLBs are established, capabilities could be transferred as appropriate.

The next counterargument was the lack of habitual relationships with RC regiments. In addition to realigning existing structure within 4th MLG to create a balanced mix of general purpose forces and tailored logistics combat organizations, RC logistics units should establish linkages with the AC units they will most likely deploy. Specifically, MFR should establish habitual relationships and direct unit commanders to report for planning to the respective MEF

Commanders. For 4th MLG, this would equate to assigning a Combat Logistics Regiment to I and II MEF respectively. This would establish working relationships, provide mutual training opportunities, facilitate the exchange of best practices, and improve collective readiness. It would also build confidence between staffs, an element that was lacking throughout OIF.

The last recommendation addresses the fundamental difference between AC and RC logistics responsibilities. Whereas AC MLGs are designed to provide logistics support to a respective MEF, the RC MLG's priority is to augment and reinforce. 4th MLG's recent OCO contributions confirm that individual augments are an integral part of the force planning cycle. However, augmenting and reinforcing at the company level vice the individual level may maximize collective skill sets and unit capabilities.

CONCLUSION

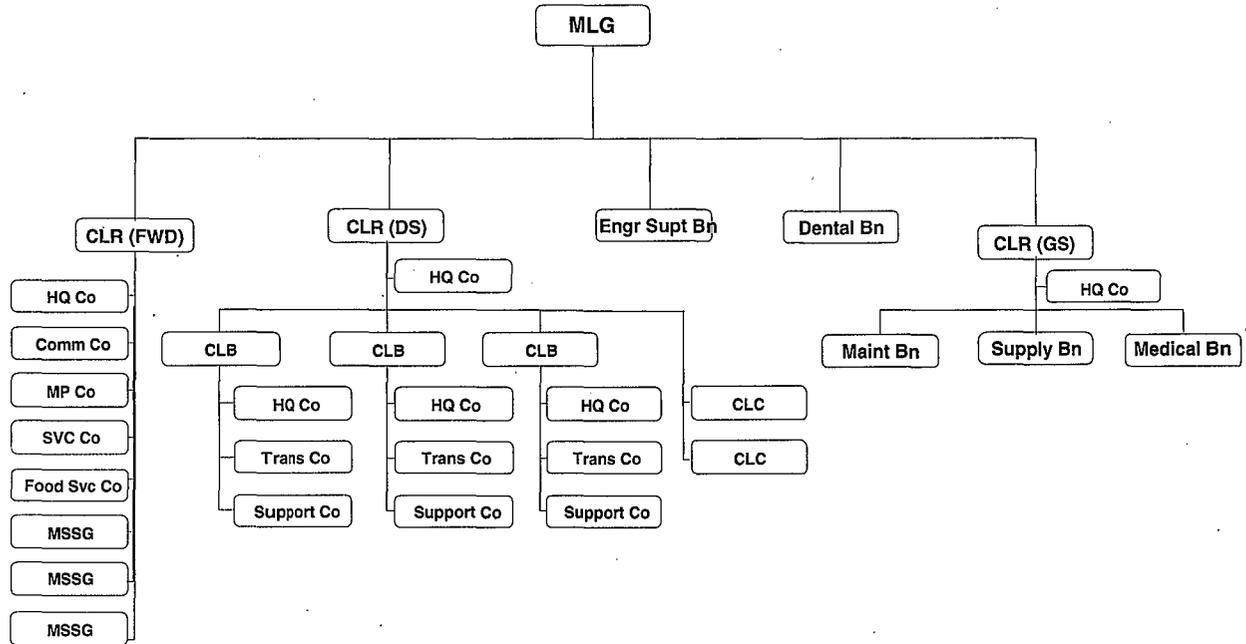
The MLG reorganization effort remains iterative, meaning as new requirements or organizational capabilities are identified by the operating forces, efforts will be made to improve MLG organization to best support the MAGTF. Reserve force structure changes initiated by DoD and the respective service components are positive, yet should be taken a step further. Specifically, the long term solution for the structure of 4th MLG must leverage potential advantages while addressing existing limitations. Standing multi-functional logistics units with habitual support relationships, just as the AC MLGs, would maximize operational effectiveness and foster interoperability. The role and contributions of 4th MLG, and the Reserve Component in general, in recent contingency operations demonstrate relevancy and adaptability to the demands of the present. The task now is to apply it to the demands of the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, further study should be initiated specifically in regards to cost, recruiting/retention, career progression, full-time support, command relationships, and geography. Viable proposals should be evaluated through Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) analysis and forwarded via the chain of command for review and decision.

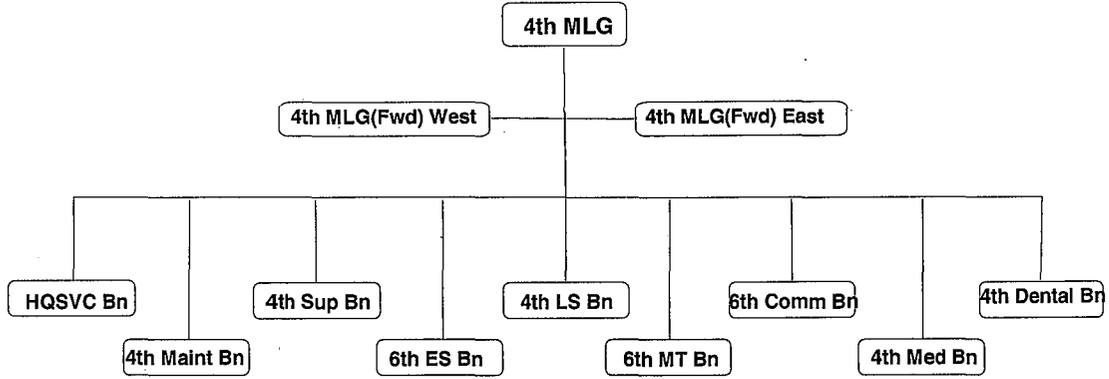
APPENDIX 1

CURRENT AC MLG ORGANIZATION



APPENDIX 2

CURRENT 4TH MLG ORGANIZATION



ENDNOTES

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- ¹¹ John Bergman, “Marine Forces Reserve in Transition,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 43 (2006): 26 – 28.
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- ¹⁵ Mike Resnick, Logistics Modernization Transition Task Force, Quantico, VA. Interview by author, 3 February 2010.
- ¹⁶ U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Administrative Message (MARADMIN) 576/05.
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- ¹⁸ U.S. Code, Title 10, Subtitle E, Part I, Chap. 1003, sect. 10102, “Purpose of Reserve Components.”
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- ²⁰ Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, *Transforming the National Guard and Reserves into a 21st Century Operational Force*, (April 2008): 9.
- ²¹ 4th Marine Logistics Group, *4th MLG Command Brief* (2009).
- ²² AC MLG Mission Statements.
- ²³ 4th MLG Mission Statement.
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- ²⁵ Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, *Transforming the National Guard and Reserves into a 21st Century Operational Force*, (April 2008): 9.

²⁶ Mike Resnick, Logistics Modernization Transition Task Force, "LCE Organization Update," (10 February 2010): 11.

²⁷ Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 4-12, *Operational-Level Logistics* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 30 January 2002): 5-2.

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